

# WEEKEND AWAY IN NORTH CORNWALL

*Jessica Gunn* finds wide sandy beaches, spectacular coastal paths, classic cream teas and some of the best seafood in the world – all without getting on a plane

**N**orth Cornwall's dramatic coastline is hardly a road less travelled. There's a reason why generations of holiday-makers have headed to its craggy cliffs, sandy beaches and laid-back cafés. And yet, even if this isn't your first visit, it's impossible not to be amazed all over again at just how perfect this corner of England really is.

As well as the mini empires of chefs Rick Stein and Paul Ainsworth at Padstow, there's huge fun to be found along the Atlantic coast with myriad beaches, a welcoming surfing community, miles of sea-view walks and no end of scenic villages.

Base yourself at Mawgan Porth, a golden sweep of sand and crescent of shops and cafés midway between Padstow and Newquay (*below*). Fully lifeguarded, the award-winning beach has acres of sand at low tide as well as rock pools, caves and Atlantic breakers to keep keen surfers active. Hire a wetsuit and even chillier days can be passed in the water, splashing in the shallows or just building fortresses on the sand.

Within walking distance is Merlin Farm, a cluster of holiday cottages set around a field of sheep, with a horse, donkey and assertive clutch of chickens for good measure. Book into one of the five-star eco-cottages (as well as classy REN



## HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHT

Peer over the edge at the dramatic coastline of Carnewas and Bedruthan Steps at your peril: it's a fierce drop from the craggy cliff edge above to the crashing sea below. At low tide you can descend the steep steps to the water's edge and walk along this magical mile-long stretch of sand. Reward yourself with scones hot from the oven, plus home-made jam and clotted cream, at the cosy National Trust café ([nationaltrust.org.uk/carnewas-at-bedruthan](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/carnewas-at-bedruthan)) back on the clifftop.

products in the bathrooms, that also means a well-equipped kitchen). Here a family of four can feel safely ensconced in serene countryside (it's also an official 'dark sky' area, ideal for stargazing) without being isolated. Supplies are available from nearby Cornish Fresh, where you'll also find exemplary pasties, ice cream, a sandwich counter and stone-baked pizzas (open in season; [cornishfresh.com](http://cornishfresh.com)). Drop into Beach Box café for great views from the roof terrace with your gelato, or pick up fish and chips from the Blue Fish Bar (open in season; [bluefishbar.co.uk](http://bluefishbar.co.uk)).

If you can tear yourself away from Mawgan Porth, or feeding the chickens at the farm, there is much to do in the vicinity. Beach-hop along the coast (Harlyn Bay is another family-friendly sandy expanse, or go by ferry from Padstow to Rock for calmer waters), drive to Padstow and wander the front with tuck from Rick Stein's takeaway, or go along the coast to Watergate Bay then down to artist hotspot St Ives beyond.

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*Merlin Farm eco cottages start from £99 per night (for a one-bed cottage). Minimum three-night stay or seven in school holidays. Book at [i-escape.com/merlin-farm-eco-cottages](http://i-escape.com/merlin-farm-eco-cottages) for a free bottle of fizz*

